

her alpenstock, and gazed across the ghastly gash at her feet to an immensity of purple-black mountaintops. She seemed at the very top of the wild mountain world; but on above into an inky blue sky reared the head of the monster mountain, snow massed and ice bound, "at they had yet to negotiate. The wind whipped ferociously about her slender, boyish body, and reddened her cheeks, and loosened little spirals all over her golden brown hair; but she continued to look off into the vast mountain world, unconcerned. Delafield, a step lower, held her arm firmly.

"You can make the big climb to the top easily," he said in a quick, decisive tone, "if you'll stick by me and take your own gait."

"Of course," answered Judith simply. "Did you think I was afraid of our mountain?"

The man quickly looked away to the coldly glistening, cruelly forbidding mountaintop, then back to the girl. "Is there anything on earth you are afraid of,—anything but the possibility of hiking two days in succession with the same man?" he inquired somewhat cynically.

"Yes," Judith came back in momentary seriousness, "de—after this." She looked down into the crevasse, and the man involuntarily tightened his grip on her arm, at the same time studying her face; but Judith, holding his gaze, tilted her chin to make up for the lapse. "How clear the air is!" she said. "We can actually see those rocks miles away as plainly as though they were just across the ravine."

"If it keeps on getting clear, you may be able to see me by dinnertime."

"Oh, Delafield! I see you all the time."

"Off in the rocks and ravines, I suppose."

"Oh, Mr. Delafield!"

"What do you think I've hiked over ice fields and glimbed rock walls with ten pounds of camera on my back for? Think I'm drawn on snapshots too? Think I'm souped with enthusiasm over photographing every tumble into snow, every group of scientists warring beside a crevasse? Judith Wells, I strike!" He put down her camera and folded his arms with a snapping air of finality. "I won't go on without my pay!"

"Oh, Mr. Delafield, you're awful!"

"Don't call me 'Mr. Delafield' again, or I'll box your ears—and one's frostbitten now: it would come off. Say Jack."

"But—it sounds so—disrespectful."

"Why do you find it necessary to respect me? If I remember right, this is the fifth time I have asked you to call me Jack."

"The sixth."

"Very well, the sixth," irritably. "Now, Judith Wells, will you keep your eyes on mine. There, that's more like it! I have a proposition to make. You are a good outer; so am I. You love this sort of thing; so do I. You are not afraid of a hard bit of climbing, and you seem to have no indigestion. That wouldn't matter, as I always carry a supply of pep-in for myself, anyway. You've got enthusiasm. It's a great thing to have enthusiasm. You do me good. I feel like a different man with you. I expect to spend the remainder of my days largely in exploring and climbing mountains. I am on my way now to the Alps. You would be company when everything else failed, and at my age everything has about failed. I have observed in you on several occasions a dread of returning to town. Very well—marry me as soon as we reach Latona, and come along."

THE thing swept crashingly into Judith's mind. Why, it would mean escape, permanent escape, from the office, from life down there in the valley after her editor married Helen, escape—oh, but she had prayed for escape! While she had been laughing and teasing and playing, all the but-to-fly on the surface up in the silent, white places, her spirit deep underneath had been praying for escape, for something to happen that would make it unnecessary for her ever again to go back to Latona, to the office. She knew with what dark thoughts she had looked into awful crevasses; she knew the involuntary suggestion that came with every perilous situation; she knew the inwardness of her abandonment to the lure of danger. To marry Delafield would be just the same as to have died—to have crossed the Great Divide and come to life in another incarnation. The rest of the time could go on as had the last eight days,—a butterfly mountaintop existence wholly unrelated to flesh and blood things down in the valley. There would be no lawns or roses, no little dinners for two, or fireside evenings with the shades drawn, or anything

like that. She would have to suppress that other Judith—press down on her hard till maybe she wouldn't exist any more—and be just the bloodless butterfly!

"Mr. Delafield—I beg your pardon—Jack—but it does seem disrespectful just the same," she said at last, "do you realize that I'm not a society girl? I'm a worker—I have hours—and a pay envelop—and I look forward to a raise."

"You are not giving me news."

"And your people—they might not approve."

"Oh, hell!"

"Mr. Delafield, a place like this, on the very edge of things, where if your foot so much as slipped we'd go into the very bowels of the earth, is no place to swear."

"If I box off one of your ears, you will have to marry me; for no one else would have you."

"Oh, yes, they would; for the hair is worn low."

"Judith, we'll have to go on in a minute," the man interrupted impatiently. "They've got field glasses on us from camp already, no doubt. Tell me, when we get to town, will you marry me and come along to the Alps?"

"But what if they do turn the glasses on us?"

"If you are coming, I shall kiss you, and they will see."

"Why the kiss?" she demanded, startled.

The man stiffened. "It's—ah—usual."

Judith regarded him steadily—and remembered her despatches. He was domineering and exacting. If she agreed now, he would make it known in camp, and that would interfere with her chance of couriers for the remaining six days. He would expect to be her companion on the rest of the hikes, and he would have no patience with her desire to complete the assignment. There would be disputes and dissension. Judith had long ago discovered that the way to put your plans through was not to invite interference. And of course she must complete the assignment. When it was over, when she had written her last story, then he could have his way all the time; for nothing would matter any more.

THIS may be just a spasm," she declared, speaking lightly. "It may be the altitude that's gone to your head. Why should I promise a thing up here in the snow and ice that you might pace the floor wondering how to get unpromised when we got even so far down as Tooter's? So let us go on as we have been for the remaining six days; then, on the very last night, the wind-up dance at Tooter's barn, you know—on our way in—if you're still sure you want to—why—after the very last dance—at midnight—you—you can."

"That's pretty odd storage."

"When odd storage things are all there are, they generally seem pretty good," retorted Judith, her small chin well up.

Judith and Jack.

They've come back.

Wearing a look romantic.

Apparently Jack.

Didn't get the sack.

Or he would be some frantic.

It was the poll of a rimester, as the two, guilty of in-

fringing the law in remaining alone on a glacier, entered the encampment an hour after the last stragglers. It was dangerous to do the least thing out of the ordinary; for the younger spirits invariably put it into rime, and the camp sang it if it liked the tune, and you didn't hear the last of it till you did something else worthy a poet. As Judith grew self-conscious, and Delafield chewed his mustache irritably, another wit broke loose:

Delafield's cut the rest of us out—

Oh, hikers, hikers, what are we about?

And on the heels of this still another sally from the farther end of the "bread line":

Chummy, chummy, don't you care—

They are both up in the air.

There was no sense to the silly jingles; but they served as a sort of recognition of something having happened that made Judith more Delafield's and Delafield more Judith's than either was anyone's else. After that the jokesmiths persistently linked their names, much to Judith's discomfiture; for it made her despatches a problem. The younger men were ready with their teasing; but when they really came to believe that the older man had a claim, they would not push themselves. Judith was compelled to play the light-headed butterfly harder than ever to secure variety in her hiking companions. Her despatches did not suffer—which means that Delafield did!

But the question that Judith kept asking herself at the time for the severing of the one tie between herself and her editor drew nearer, was whether, when there would be no letter to write, no game to play,—no reason for it,—she could hold fast to the butterfly character? Would she ever be able wholly to forget? Would there always be haunting memories of those other days, when she had been Judith Wells, a reporter on "The Mist"? Would she forever see shadow shapes? Would she always and forever thrill to the memory of a low, vibrant voice? If only she could forget, if only she could believe she ever would forget, just the same as if she had died, had really crossed the Great Divide, and was living in another world altogether—it would all be so much easier!

THE final great climb to the summit was effected without accident, much to the annoyance of the other reporters, who had waited expectantly for two weeks and were now disgusted that there was to be no live mountain news to wire their papers. Judith left them at the supper table, grumbling over the staleness of the whole enterprise, left Delafield, who was angry because she had coasted back to camp with one of the younger men, and hurried down the hill to her own inglenook to write the last letter she was ever to write for her paper. She quickly lighted her fire and settled down happily into her mood.

Her pencil flew across the pages. She was bidding goodby to the mountain! She got into it the wrench of spirit that the breaking up of a mountain camp gives one; only it was really the wrench of her own spirit in bidding goodby to her editor. She said farewell to the trails; only it was to the trails of a loved newspaper office that her heart was saying farewell. She spread on paper the glorious elation of life in the upper heights; and all the time it was the upper heights of love that she was actually spreading on paper. It was a wonderful story, the last mountain story of Judith's, that last work she was ever to do for "The Mist."

She stopped at last, and sealing the bulky manuscript ran back to camp. Unusual excitement prevailed. A ranger had brought in the first mail they had had in the entire two weeks, and everyone had gathered about him, eager for news. There was a letter from Henson for Judith,—good old Henson. She hurriedly broke it open and kneeling by the fire, read it:

"Greatest mountain stuff ever written," he had scrawled over a sheet of copy paper. "We've scooped the whole Northwest. Even 'The Union's' eating it blood raw. Keep it up!"

She stuffed the letter into her pocket, and going back to the ranger handed him her thick envelop. He was on his way to Tooter's.

"What in the world did you find to make a story out of?" Blick demanded sourly. He had evidently heard from his office too.

"Oh, just mountain stuff," Judith went back to the campfire and looked about for Delafield. She didn't want to be alone a single minute now. She didn't want to think, or remember, or do a thing—but just be a butterfly!

It was a motley crowd that reached

"She wondered if  
after all it was  
only a dream."

